

RESEARCH NOTE NC-81

NORTH CENTRAL FOREST EXPERIMENT STATION, FOREST SERVICE—U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
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THE CURRENT STATUS OF PRESCRIBED BURNING IN THE LAKE STATES

ABSTRACT.— Describes the current usage of prescribed fire in the Lake States. Costs are summarized for each purpose and reasons for cost differences are discussed.
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The use of prescribed burning is increasing in the Lake States. A survey was made in Minnesota, Wisconsin, and Michigan during the 1968 field season to determine what agencies are currently doing prescribed burning, their reasons for burning, and their costs.

The survey showed that approximately 13,800 acres were burned by prescription in the three States during 1968 (table 1). About 13,000 acres of the total were burned for wildlife habitat improvement, about 550 acres were burned for forest regeneration purposes, and 50 acres were burned for blueberry production. Approximately 7,500 acres (55 percent of the total area burned) were burned at the Crex Meadows Wildlife Area managed by the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources.

Costs of prescribed burns ranged from \$0.15 to \$18.77 per acre. Generally, the wildlife habitat burns were largest and cost less per acre than the forest regeneration burns.

Cost-per-acre differences among the various agencies were not great, but tended to be lowest among the more experienced operators. The greatest cost

differences were associated with the purposes for making the burns. For example, burning for seedbed preparation was more expensive than for improving wildlife habitat.

Conclusions

Even though prescribed burning is being used more frequently, it is not yet widely used by land-management agencies in the Lake States. The reasons for this are not clear, but probably lack of experience and training in the use and application of prescribed fire is the chief one. However, costs of prescribed burning are competitive with costs of other techniques available, and its use should increase in the future.

Methods of reducing costs per acre include burning under the least hazardous conditions possible commensurate with accomplishing the objective, improving the ignition and control techniques, and providing thorough training on how to execute the burns. Area ignition shows great promise as a means of reducing the manpower and length of time required to burn large areas, as well as reducing control problems.

Table 1.—*Summary of reported prescribed burns during the 1968 field season in the Lake States*

OPERATIONAL BURNS			
Agency	Area burned	Purpose	Average cost per acre
	<u>Acres</u>		<u>Dollars</u>
Bureau of Sport Fisheries and Wildlife	1,364	Wildlife management	0.41
Michigan Department of Conservation	556	Wildlife management	3.02
Minnesota Department of Conservation	1,280	Wildlife management	1.48
	144	Seedbed preparation	8.48
	104	Planting site preparation	7.64
U.S.D.A. Forest Service	250	Planting site preparation	3.77
	50	Blueberry production	5.00
	45	Seedbed preparation	13.00
	270	Wildlife management	1.94
Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources	9,772	Wildlife management	.32
	<u>34</u>	Planting site preparation	4.81
	13,869		
EXPERIMENTAL BURNS			
University of Minnesota	235	Natural area maintenance	
U.S.D.A. Forest Service	350	Jack pine seedbed preparation	
Minnesota Department of Conservation in coopera- tion with Univ. of Minn.	330	Ruffed grouse habitat	
Minnesota Department of Conservation	<u>21</u>	Black spruce seedbed preparation	
	936		

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